



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Howard County Education Association Announces Recommendations
for Board of Education, County Council primaries in 2026**

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Sarai Gray

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Ellicott City, MD – The Howard County Education Association (HCEA) is proud to announce recommendations for the County Council and Board of Education races. These candidates have earned HCEA's support for the 2026 primary election.

The recommendations come after seven member-led panels with over 40 rank-and-file educators spent more than 16 hours conducting in-depth interviews of candidates. Panelists represented a wide swath of HCEA membership across jobs, worksites, and experience levels. HCEA's Government Relations Committee reviewed all panelists' ratings and feedback and made recommendations for each office. The HCEA Board of Directors unanimously concurred with each recommendation and voted to recommend endorsements to the union's Representative Assembly, where elected representatives debated and voted on the final recommendations.

HCEA President Ben Schmitt said "families move here to Howard County and choose to build their lives here for one reason: the excellent reputation of our public schools, and the educators who work tirelessly to teach and support our kids and communities. At a time when public education itself is under assault, these candidates will protect our public schools, and will work with us to increase funding so that all of our kids can achieve their potential – regardless of their zip code.

HCEA recommends the following candidates for the 2026 primary election:

Board of Education, At Large:

- Lan Lan Xu
- Mark Covington

County Council District 1: Kevin Chin

County Council District 2: Jessica Nichols (HCEA Member and Teacher of the Year)

County Council District 4: Janssen Evelyn

County Council District 5: Cat Carter



Matt Gresick, HCEA Government Relations Committee Co-Chair, added, "I am extraordinarily proud of the of the rank-and-file members who participated in our recommendations. Now we begin the hard work of educating our members and the public about what's at stake for Howard County Schools in 2026."

Recommendations for Councilmanic District 3 and County Executive will be determined by the Representative Council at a later date. Recommendations for General Assembly races will be announced at a later date by the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA).

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About Howard County Education Association (HCEA)

HCEA, a local affiliate of the NEA and MSEA, is the union of over 6,500 educators and support staff in Howard County Public Schools, and is the County's largest union. HCEA believes in the power of organized educators to transform the lives of their kids and communities, regardless of their zip code.